



From the Board Room

ACTIVITIES OF THE NC BOARD OF EDUCATION

MAY 2014

The State Board of Education is comprised of the State Treasurer, the Lieutenant Governor and 11 citizens appointed by the Governor. This newsletter highlights the Board's activities on behalf of the 1.5 million public school children in our state and the more than 100,000 educators who provide services to children. View all State Board of Education member and advisor information online at <https://eboard.eboardsolutions.com/AboutUs/AboutUs.aspx?S=10399&TID=1>. To access current and archived versions of From the Boardroom, visit <http://stateboard.ncpublicschools.gov/> and select the "SBE Newsletter" tab.

FROM PAPER TO DIGITAL – PLANNING FOR TEXTBOOK RESOURCES OF THE FUTURE

E-Readers have replaced paper books for many of us, and this trend also is important in the education arena. The State Board of Education received an update this month on its plan to transition local public schools from reliance on paper textbooks to digital learning resources. Under a contract with the Friday Institute for Education Innovation at North Carolina State University, Board members seek answers to key questions, such as:

- How will North Carolina move from textbook funding to funding for digital material?
- How can we ensure that education resources for students are current, aligned with the curriculum and effective?
- What information technology infrastructure is necessary to support digital learning?

A timeline for this work began at the project kick-off on April 28, and a final report is due by Aug. 1, 2015. In between, a wireless infrastructure plan is due Sept. 1 and a digital learning feasibility study and assessment report on May 1, 2015, with other milestone reports in-between.

TEACHER COMPENSATION AND CONTRACT RESEARCH

As part of its ongoing concern about teacher compensation and ways to improve the teaching profession, the NC State Board of Education received a research report from students in the Duke University Sanford School of Public Policy who spent a semester studying the idea of 12-month teacher contracts. The students looked at advantages and disadvantages of 12-month teacher contracts. Teachers today are generally employed for 10-month contracts, but many spend a significant amount of time in the extra two months preparing lessons for the upcoming year and participating in professional development. A survey of teachers and principals found that many educators say that teachers need additional time for improving their methods, for curriculum development and for analyzing student test score data.

While 12-month contracts could provide more time for these activities, there are disadvantages, including potential for some teachers to leave the profession if longer contracts were in place, and the costs of implementation. The most promising implementation options are with teachers with fewer than five years of experience (group most receptive to 12-month contracts); elementary school teachers (most likely to say they need more time for curriculum and methods development); and schools with higher teacher turnover rates.

STUDENT DATA: HANDLED WITH CARE

The state of North Carolina's traditional public and public charter schools collect information about students. These data record students' names, their parents' or guardians' names, their addresses and other basic information as well as courses students have taken, their grades, and test scores for state-required tests and information about students' special needs.

In this day of digital data and well-publicized consumer data breeches, parents understandably have questions about these issues. Dr. Lou Fabrizio, director of the Data, Research and Federal Policy Office at the NC Department of Public Instruction, this month gave State Board of Education members an overview of how student data are safeguarded. The federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protects the privacy of student education records and provides certain parent rights. Parents have the right to inspect and review their students' education records maintained by the school, and they have the right to request that a school correct records that parents believe to be inaccurate or misleading.

Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent in order to release any information from a student's education records. For directory information – such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date of birth, honors and awards and dates of school attendance – schools may disclose these items without special consent, but parents can ask their schools not to disclose these directory items. Generally, schools ask parents to sign a form each year indicating whether or not they want to "opt out" of the directory information.

There are some cases in which schools are allowed to share student records without parent consent: other school officials with legitimate educational interest, schools to which a student is transferring, appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student, organizations conducting studies or audits or evaluations on behalf of the school, complying with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena, appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies, and state and local authorities within the juvenile justice system under specific state laws.

In reporting information about groups of students, care also is taken to protect privacy. For example, in reporting student subgroup information on school report cards, there is no public reporting of group information when there are fewer than five students in a group. There are many policies and procedures in place to protect data – including student data – and these are available online at www.ncpublicschools.org/data/management/resources.